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EXCISE

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P 200059Z MAY 92  
FM AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6054  
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
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AMCONSUL SHENYANG  
AIT TAIPEI 1997  
US CUSTOMS SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
( ) RELEASE  
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EO Citations

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FOIA Exemptions  
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TS authority to

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BEIJING PLEASE PASS CHENGDU

HONG KONG PLEASE PASS SCR/HK GRAY

HQS CUSTOMS FOR OFFICE OF FOREIGN OPERATIONS/FAR EAST  
DESK

E.O. 12356: N/A

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TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, ELAB, ETRD, CH  
SUBJECT: VISIT TO "RED STAR" LABOR CAMP

REFS: A) GUANGZHOU 01776  
B) 91 GUANGZHOU 07842  
C) 91 GUANGZHOU 07681 (NOTAL)  
D) HONG KONG 03586 (NOTAL)  
E) BEIJING 08502

1. SUMMARY: ON MARCH 27 CONSULATE OFFICERS VISITED  
THE RED STAR TEA FARM, A FORCED LABOR CAMP IN NORTHERN  
GUANGDONG PROVINCE, TO INVESTIGATE REPORTS OF PRISON-  
MADE PRODUCTS DESTINED FOR FOREIGN MARKETS. AUTHORITIES  
AT THE CAMP WERE POLITE, DENIED ALL WRONG-DOING,

END

SUMMARY.

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2. TWO CONSULATE OFFICERS VISITED THE RED STAR TEA FARM AND FORCED LABOR CAMP ON THURSDAY, MAY 14. THIS VISIT HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 27 BUT HAD TO BE DELAYED NEARLY TWO MONTHS BECAUSE OF FLOODS IN THE YINGDE AREA (SEE REF A).

3. THE CONSULATE OFFICERS WERE RECEIVED AND PROVIDED A GENERAL BRIEFING BY THE CAMP COMMANDER, ZHOU KERANG, AND THE CAMP POLITICAL COMMISSAR, LI QIQIN. THE VISIT INCLUDED A BRIEFING AT THE CAMP'S HEADQUARTERS, A WALK-THROUGH OF ONE OF THE PRISONER COMPOUNDS, A DRIVE-THROUGH OF THE CAMP'S TEA GROWING SECTIONS, AND AN INSPECTION TOUR OF THE TEA REFINING AND PACKAGING FACILITY- LI, WHO DID MOST OF THE TALKING DURING THE

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THREE-HOUR MORNING VISIT, SAID THE CONSULATE OFFICERS WERE THE FIRST FOREIGNERS EVER PERMITTED TO VISIT "RED STAR," WHICH HAS BEEN IN OPERATION SINCE 1952. HE AND ZHOU DENIED AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY ANY PRODUCT PRODUCED BY CAMP PRISONERS WAS SOLD FOR EXPORT.

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REQUESTS TO LOOK AT RECORDS WERE DENIED  
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4. DURING THE BRIEFING, WE ASKED THE CAMP'S TOP ECHELON (BESIDES ZHOU AND LI, ANOTHER FOUR OR FIVE UNIFORMED CAMP OFFICERS ATTENDED THE BRIEFING) IF WE COULD LOOK AT ANY OR ALL RECORDS OF SALES OF PRODUCTS. WE SAID WE WERE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF INDIVIDUALS TO WHOM TEA OR OTHER PRODUCTS WERE SOLD. WE WERE TOLD SUCH RECORDS WERE "SKIMPY" OR "NONEXISTENT" AND, IN ANY CASE, WERE FOR "INTERNAL USE" ONLY. WE WERE ALSO DENIED PERMISSION TO TAKE ANY PHOTOGRAPHS DURING OUR VISIT TO THE CAMP.

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WE WERE TOLD PERHAPS SOMEONE ELSE IS USING THE "RED STAR" LABEL  
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5. WE ASKED IF ANY OTHER PRISONER-MADE PRODUCTS WERE SOLD OUTSIDE THE CAMP. (SEE BELOW FOR LIST OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS PRODUCED, ACCORDING THE CAMP'S

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COMMANDERS, BY "RED STAR.") WE SPECIFICALLY ASKED IF  
THERE WAS A FACILITY CALLED THE "RED STAR WOOL FABRIC  
FACTORY" (HONGXING MAOZHI CHANG) ANYWHERE IN THE  
VICINITY. WE WERE TOLD, EMPHATICALLY, "NO." WHEN WE  
PRESSED, SAYING THERE WERE REPORTS IN HONG KONG ABOUT  
SUCH A FACTORY IN THE YINGDE AREA, WE WERE TOLD,  
"PROBABLY, NO," BUT THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO PREVENT  
OTHERS, EVEN CAMP (NONPRISONER) WORKERS FROM USING A  
NAME LIKE "RED STAR."

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THEY ALSO DENIED ANY CONNECTION TO "FLOWER CITY"

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6. WE ALSO ASKED IF "RED STAR" PROVIDED ANY OF ITS  
PRODUCTS TO THE "FLOWER CITY" FACTORY IN GUANGZHOU.  
(COMMENT: WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED (AS ALSO HAVE  
HONG KONG JOURNALISTS) THE "FLOWER CITY" FACTORY AS A  
PRISON MAKING SHOES FOR EXPORT AND ALSO AS A  
DISTRIBUTION POINT FOR OTHER PRISON-MADE GOODS MADE FOR  
EXPORT. END COMMENT) OUR HOSTS INSISTED THEY HAD  
NEVER HEARD OF THE "FLOWER CITY" FACTORY AND CONTINUED  
TO DO SO EVEN AFTER WE POINTED OUT WE HAD OBTAINED TEA  
BAGS WHOSE LABELS LISTED THE CONTENTS AS COMING FROM  
THE "RED STAR TEA FARM IN YINGDE" AND THE "FLOWER CITY  
TEA FARM" AS A DISTRIBUTION CENTER. ANYONE COULD USE  
THE NAME "RED STAR" WE WERE TOLD AGAIN.

7. DURING THE BRIEFING AND LATER DURING THE TOUR OF  
THE CAMP, WE SEVERAL TIMES WARNED THE CAMP LEADERS THAT  
THE ISSUE OF PRISON-MADE PRODUCTS BEING EXPORTED TO THE  
U.S. WAS VERY SERIOUS AND ONE WHICH COULD AFFECT  
PROFOUNDLY FUTURE TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND  
CHINA. WE EMPHASIZED OUR CONCERN WAS TO STOP CURRENT  
VIOLATIONS OF OUR LAW AND PREVENT FUTURE ONES. WE ALSO  
EXPLAINED WE WERE NOT INTERESTED IN BLAMING "RED STAR"  
FOR PRACTICES OF BUYERS WHO MIGHT BE PURCHASING TEA OR  
OTHER PRODUCTS FROM "RED STAR" FOR "DOMESTIC" SALES AND  
THEN EXPORTING, IN VIOLATION OF U.S. LAW AND CHINESE  
REGULATIONS, SUCH PRODUCTS TO THE U.S. BUT WE NEEDED

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"RED STAR'S" HELP IN IDENTIFYING SUCH BUYERS. WE WERE  
ASSURED AT EVERY TURN THAT NO "RED STAR" PRODUCTS ARE  
EXPORTED, EITHER ACCIDENTALLY OR INTENTIONALLY. BUT,  
DESPITE SEVERAL REQUESTS, WE WERE NOT ALLOWED TO SEE  
ANY RECORDS.

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NO OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH ANY PRISONERS  
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8. DURING THE TOUR OF THE PRISONERS' COMPOUND, WE WATCHED 39 PRISONERS (IN WHAT WERE CLEARLY BRAND NEW UNIFORMS: BLUE WITH WHITE STRIPES ON THE SIDES OF THE SLEEVES AND PANTS) DO A QUICK AND WELL-DISCIPLINED DRILL. THE COMPOUND, ONE OF FIVE IN THE CAMP WE WERE TOLD, HAD HIGH (15 TO 20 FEET) PERIMETER WALLS TOPPED WITH BARBED WIRE AND LARGE OPEN AREAS INTERSPERSED AMONG SMALL RESIDENTIAL AND CLASSROOM BUILDINGS. OUR QUICK TOUR LEFT DOUBTS IN OUR MIND SUCH A SMALL COMPOUND COULD HOUSE TWENTY PERCENT OF THE PRISONERS. OUR HOSTS PROUDLY POINTED TO TWO "SUGGESTION/APEALS" BOXES IN FULL VIEW IN THE COURTYARD WHERE THE DRILL WAS BEING CONDUCTED. (THEY HAD EARLY EMPHASIZED PRISONERS, WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS, RETAIN THEIR POLITICAL RIGHTS.)

9. AS THE DRILL CAME TO AN END, WE ASKED IF WE COULD SPEAK TO ANY OF THE PRISONERS. WE WERE TOLD, "YES," BUT THE PRISONERS HAD MORE DRILLING TO DO FIRST AND WE COULD CATCH THEM AT THE END OF OUR TOUR. (THE PRISONERS WERE NOWHERE IN SIGHT WHEN WE EXITED THE COMPOUND FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER.) WE WALKED THROUGH THE  
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COMPOUND, OBSERVED (FROM OUTSIDE) A CLASSROOM SESSION FOR NEW RECRUITS, AND VISITED A KITCHEN, WHERE LARGE CHUNKS OF MEAT WAS BEING PREPARED FOR A NOONDAY MEAL.

10. DURING THE DRIVE THROUGH THE CAMP, AT EVERY FORK IN THE ROAD THERE WERE TWO SMARTLY UNIFORMED AND ARMED GUARDS WHO INDICATED THE PROPER TURN. WE DROVE BY THE FIELDS WHERE PRISONERS WERE HARVESTING TEA. WE WERE NOT ALLOWED TO STOP AND TALK TO PRISONERS. ARMED GUARDS WERE LIGHTLY INTERSPERSED AMONG THE PRISONERS, ALMOST ALL OF WHOM HAD BLUE UNIFORMS AND STRAW HATS.

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AIT TAIPEI 1999  
US CUSTOMS SERVICE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 04 GUANGZHOU 02840

BEIJING PLEASE PASS CHENGDU

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NO SAMPLES HANDED OUT TODAY  
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11. THE REFINING AND PACKAGING FACILITY WAS RUN AND  
STAFFED BY NONPRISONER WORKERS, MOST OF WHOM WE WERE  
TOLD WERE (FEMALE) RELATIVES OF CAMP GUARDS. BASED  
UPON OUR PREVIOUS VISIT TO TEA FARMS IN THE YINGDE AREA  
(SEE REF B), THE FACILITY DID NOT APPEAR TO BE VERY

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LARGE OR VERY EFFICIENT. WE WERE TAKEN TO WHAT WAS DESCRIBED AS THE ONLY PACKAGING WAREHOUSE, WHERE TEA WAS PACKED IN UNMARKED 50-KILO BURLAP BAGS. THERE WERE SEVERAL WORKERS PUTTING TEA IN SMALL HALF-POUND PLASTIC BAGS FOR RETAIL SALES. THE BAGS HAD THE FOLLOWING WORDS, IN CHINESE, PRINTED ON THEM: "BLACK TEA" IN LARGE LETTERS AND "RED STAR TEA FARM, YINGDE" IN SMALL LETTERS. WE WERE TOLD THESE WERE THE ONLY BAGS USED FOR RETAIL SALES. DESPITE OUR REQUESTS, WE WERE NOT ALLOWED TO TAKE ANY BAGS, WITH OR WITHOUT TEA, WITH US. WE WERE AGAIN DENIED PERMISSION TO LOOK AT ANY RECORDS.

12. AS THE VISIT CONCLUDED, OUR HOSTS ASKED US IN A FRIENDLY WAY WHAT WE THOUGHT OF THE LABOR CAMP AND OUR VISIT. WE REPLIED WE HAD NO BASIS FOR JUDGMENT IN AS MUCH AS THIS WAS OUR FIRST VISIT TO SUCH A CAMP. WE AGAIN REPEATED OUR WARNING ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHINESE GOVERNMENT FAILURE TO CONTROL EXPORTS TO THE U.S. OF PRISON MADE PRODUCTS. AND WE ASKED OUR HOSTS

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TO COMMUNICATE TO US ANY "INFORMATION" WHICH LATER  
BECOME AVAILABLE TO THEM WHICH MIGHT EXPLAIN THE "MANY  
RUMORS" OF SUCH EXPORTS ORIGINATING IN YINGDE.

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GENERAL INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOUT RED STAR LABOR CAMP  
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13. THE RED STAR TEA FARM IS A "REFORM THROUGH LABOR" CAMP SPREAD OUT OVER 520 HECTARES APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR'S DRIVE NORTH OF YINGDE CITY. THERE ARE 260 HECTARES PLANTED IN TEA AND PRODUCING, ON AVERAGE, 150 METRIC TONS PER YEAR. THE CAMP'S 4,000 PRISONERS ARE GUARDED BY 600 JUDICIAL AND ARMED POLICE. THE CAMP'S POPULATION INCLUDES ANOTHER 600 FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE GUARDS, MANY OF WHOM ARE EMPLOYED BY THE CAMP. BESIDES TEA, THE PRISONERS ALSO HARVEST RICE AND OTHER VEGETABLES AND RAISE FISH, CHICKENS, DUCKS, AND PIGS FOR CAMP CONSUMPTION AND FOR LOCAL SALE.

14. PRISONERS WORK EIGHT HOURS A DAY AND STUDY TWO HOURS AT NIGHT. THEY RISE AT 6 A.M. AND GO TO BED AT 10 P.M. THE EMPHASIS IS ON REFORM (ESPECIALLY, POLITICAL EDUCATION) FIRST AND WORK SECOND. MANY PRISONERS EARN PRIMARY OR MIDDLE SCHOOL CERTIFICATES WHILE AT THE CAMP AND ACQUIRE SKILLS WHICH HELP THEM TO BECOME PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS AFTER RELEASE FROM THE CAMP.

15. ALL PRISONERS AT "RED STAR" ARE MALE. MAXIMUM SENTENCES BEING SERVED ARE 14 YEARS. CRIMES COMMITTED



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LEADING TO INCARCERATION AT THE LAECOR CAMP INCLUDE  
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THEFT, ROBBERY, BIGAMY, EMBEZZLEMENT, AND BRIBE-TAKING.  
MORE SERIOUS CRIMES (SUCH AS MURDER) USUALLY RESULT IN  
INCARCERATION IN PRISONS. GOOD BEHAVIOR RESULTS IN  
REDUCTION OF SENTENCE. (A FIFTH OF THE PRISONERS EARN  
REDUCTIONS EVERY YEAR.) THERE ARE FEW ATTEMPTS AT  
ESCAPE (ONLY "TWO OR THREE" LAST YEAR), WHICH CAN  
RESULT IN A "DOUBLING" OF THE SENTENCE BEING SERVED.

16. THE PRISONERS' MONTHLY RATION OF FOOD IS 35 POUNDS  
OF RICE, FIVE TO SIX POUNDS OF PORK, AND 30 POUNDS OF  
VEGETABLES. FOR RECREATION, THE PRISONERS ARE PROVIDED

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READING MATERIALS AND ALSO CAN WATCH TV. AT ONE POINT  
WE ASKED IF THE PRISONERS, IN STEP WITH THE REST OF  
GUANGDONG PROVINCE, WERE STUDYING DENG XIAOPING'S  
SPEECHES FROM HIS JANUARY/FEBRUARY TRIP TO THE SPECIAL  
ECONOMIC ZONES. COMMENT: THESE SPEECHES DETAIL SENIOR  
LEADER DENG'S CALL FOR MORE MARKET-ORIENTED ECONOMIC  
REFORMS AND EXPORT-ORIENTED MANUFACTURING. END  
COMMENT. [REDACTED] THEY PICK UP THIS ON  
TV AND IN THE NEWSPAPERS, BUT THEIR OWN STUDY SESSIONS  
ARE DEVOTED TO MORE GENERAL AND BASIC ISSUES SUCH AS  
"PATRIOTISM" AND "RESPECT FOR THE LAW."

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17. COMMENT. IN PREVIOUS REPORTS WE HAVE POINTED OUT  
RUMORS OF LARGE-SCALE PRODUCTION OF TEA BY PRISONERS IN.  
THE YINGDE AREA APPEAR TO BE WRONG. WE SAW NOTHING  
DURING THIS THIRD TRIP TO YINGDE IN SIX MONTHS TO  
CHANGE OUR OPINION. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE BELIEVE IT  
IS VERY LIKELY OUR HOSTS WERE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO BE  
POLITE [REDACTED]

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OUR VISIT HIGHLIGHTS THE FACT THAT PERMISSION TO VISIT  
A FORCED LABOR CAMP OR PRISON IS NOT NECESSARILY USEFUL  
(IN DETERMINING DESTINATION OF PRISONER-MADE PRODUCTS)  
UNLESS SOME KIND OF ACCESS TO SALES RECORDS IS ALSO  
PROVIDED.

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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a  
\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* CONFIDENTIAL